

"The sickness of civilization consists...in its failure to incorporate
(and only then to move beyond the limits of) the primitive."

—Anthropologist Stanley Diamond, In Search of the Primitive

BOOKS USED AND RECOMMENDED

**People Without Government: An
Anthropology of Anarchy**
(Harold Barclay)

In Search of the Primitive
(Stanley Diamond)

Ishmael
(Daniel Quinn)

Days of War, Nights of Love
(CrimethInc.)

Guns, Germs, and Steel
(Jared Diamond)

Future Primitive
(John Zerzan)

**Cambridge Encyclopedia of
Hunters and Gatherers**
(Richard B. Lee)

WEBSITES

www.greenanarchy.org

www.crimethinc.com

www.crimethinc.net

www.primitivism.com

www.wildresistance.org

www.infoshop.org

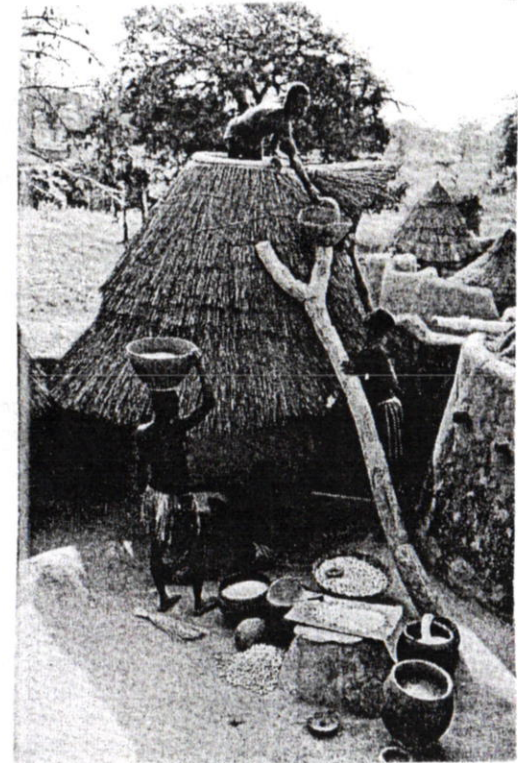
www.wildroots.org

www.greenanarchy.info

www.culturalsurvival.com

RADICAL ANTHROPOLOGY 101

A Beginner's Guide to Anarchy and Human Nature



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10,000 YEARS AGO WE WERE ALL ANARCHISTS!

Wasn't the forager life "nasty, short, and brutish"?

If anything, their lives were much easier than ours. On average foragers had 14 hours of "work" a week. Work consists of gathering and hunting (or trapping, which is much easier), making tools, cooking, making babies, dancing, and visiting others. In many societies, the words "work" and "play" are synonymous. As for health, they often lived long and healthy lives. Cancer, diabetes, and other chronic diseases were absent among these societies. The diet they ate was extremely healthy, they had excellent eye sight, and beautiful teeth. What's important here is not actually quantity of life (because some Foragers did not live as long as some Americans today) but quality of life. Foragers had a high quality of life. Long life expectancies in the Western world often are created through unnatural and obtrusive biomedical means in which life is sustained by chemicals and machines – for those who can afford it. Many others, especially in the US, cannot afford quality health care and therefore do not live as long. Is it better to live a life of 40 or 50 years healthy, fit, and free, or 80 years depending on diapers, a cocktail of pills, and a nursing home?

Even foragers have hierarchy and authority.

Foragers often times have temporary "leaders", those who possess a special knowledge or are exceptionally good at something, however they exercise no control over anyone else in the group. Their suggestions can be accepted or ignored altogether.

Authority and hierarchy are human nature.

Who defines this "human nature"? By nature, we are most often talking about what comes natural or instinctual to a species. As a species, for 99% of our human history (2 million years as *Homo sapiens*), we have lived as foragers – autonomous, egalitarian, cooperative and free human beings. This is our nature as human animals.

But even among the animals there is hierarchy.

True, some species of animals are hierarchically organized, but the hierarchy among most animals is different than the tyranny and oppression related to human hierarchy. Animals such as wolves and dogs have an absolute hierarchy, whereas cats have what is called a relative hierarchy: each individual may have a different position depending on time, place, and situation in general. Even in our closest relatives, the chimpanzees, we can see hierarchic organization, however this varies. For example, bonobo chimpanzees actually have a less pronounced dominance hierarchy as compared to the common chimpanzee. They also have strong female-female bonds and low levels of aggression. We must remember that every animal species is different. As human animals, anarchy is our nature.

Violence is part of our human nature.

All animals can be aggressive, humans included. However, violence (organized aggression, warfare, mutually assured destruction, etc.) is absent among foraging societies. Fights and feuds do exist, but they are more like family feuds than tribal warfare. There are no proto-like elements for war in these small societies.

Aren't primitive societies like the Yanomami violent?

The Yanomami are indigenous horticulturalists from the Amazon. They are not a "primitive" society. They possess a hierarchy, have more stable positions of authority, and are patriarchal. Whether they are as violent as we have read is up in the air, as the main anthropologist studying the Yanomami was an aggressive person who was often projecting his self onto his "subjects". Primitive societies, as stated earlier, possess aggression, but whatever "violence" they have is not nearly as bad as the violence that exists in our society: war, poverty, violence against women, sweatshops, wage slavery, the police, etc.

We can't have anarchy, humans are bad by nature.

Good and bad are subjective terms. They have no validity. How can we judge what is good and bad except by our own cultural norms and ideas (and since our culture is hierarchical, of course we think we're bad)? You don't need to be "good" or "bad" to have an anarchy. Cooperation, mutual aid, equality, peace – these are all the qualities our ancestors possessed. It is natural. Whether it is good or bad is irrelevant, it just works.

Greed is a part of human nature. Given the chance, people would take all they could and look out for only themselves.

Greed, private property, and the individualism that is mentioned is absent among foraging societies. These characteristics did not arise until the agricultural revolution, when a surplus was created and subsequently coveted by an elite few. Greed is learned, not a natural instinct. Whether someone will become greedy in a particular situation depends on the culture they were raised in. In the West, greed is a cornerstone of capitalist culture. There are many examples of altruism among human beings and other animals. There are also many acts of spontaneous cooperation and solidarity – such as the Argentina revolution (mentioned above), the Seattle WTO protests in 1999, and a few people on the street running to the rescue of an injured stranger.

Aren't you just perpetuating the Noble Savage myth?

This myth paints the picture that "primitive" (as I have defined it) life was perfect. This is not true. Perfection does not exist, and of course there were many problems among foraging societies. They were not perfect, but relative to the world we live in today, their life was a much, easier, healthier, and happier one.